

# A Tree in the Forest

## PART 1

by Ajahn Chah

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**PART 1**

*"We have to talk about the Dhamma like this, using similes, because the Dhamma has no form. Is it square or is it round? You can't say. The only way to talk about it is through similes like these."*

# Similes

## Aimless Wanderer

When we have no real home, we're like an aimless wanderer out on the road, going this way for a while and then that way, stopping for a while and then setting off again. Until we return to our real home, whatever we do we feel ill at ease, just like somebody who's left his village to go on a journey. Only when he gets home again can he really relax and be comfortable. Nowhere in the world is any real peace to be found. That's the nature of the world. Look within yourself and find it there instead. When we think of the Buddha and how truly he spoke, we feel how worthy he is of reverence and respect. Whenever we see the truth of something, we see his teachings, even if we've never actually practiced Dhamma. But even if we have knowledge of his teachings, have studied and practiced them but still have not seen their truth, then we're still homeless like the aimless wanderer.

## Banana Peel

When you see things in the world like banana peels that have no great value to you, then you're free to walk in the world without being moved, without being troubled, without being hurt in any way by all the various kinds of things that come and pass away, whether pleasant or unpleasant. This is the path that leads you to freedom.

## Blind Man

Both the body and mind are constantly arising and ceasing, conditions are in a state of constant turmoil. The reason we can't see this in line with the truth is because we keep believing in the untrue. It's like being guided by a blind man. How can we travel with him in safety? A blind man will only lead us into forests and thickets. How could he lead us to safety when he can't see? In the same way, our mind is deluded by conditions, creating suffering in the search for happiness, creating difficulty in the search for peace. Such a mind can have only problems and suffering. Really, we want to get rid of suffering and difficulty, but instead we create those very things. All we can do is complain. We create bad causes, and the truth of appearances and conditions and try to cling to them.

## Bottle of Medicine

We can compare practice to a patient who does not take the medicine that his doctor has left for him. Although detailed instructions have been written on the bottle, all the patient does is read them and doesn't actually take the medicine. And before he dies, he may complain bitterly that the doctor wasn't any good; that the medicine didn't cure him. He may think that the doctor was a fake or that the medicine was worthless, yet he had only spent his time examining the bottle and reading its instructions instead of actually taking the medicine. If he had followed the doctor's advice, however, and taken the medicine regularly as prescribed, he would have recovered.

Doctors prescribe medicine to eliminate diseases from the body. The teachings of the Buddha are prescribed to cure diseases of the mind and to bring it back to its natural healthy state. So the Buddha can be considered to be a doctor who prescribes cures for the illnesses of the mind, which are found in each one of us without exception. When you see these illnesses of the mind, does it not make sense to look to the Dhamma as support, as medicine to cure your illnesses?

## Child Playing

When we have contemplated the nature of the heart many times, we will come to understand that the heart's ways are just as they are and can't be otherwise. They make up the nature of the heart. If we see this clearly, then we can detach from thoughts and feelings. And we don't have to add on anything more if we constantly tell ourselves that "that's just the way it is." When the heart truly understands, it lets go of everything. Thinking and feeling will be deprived of power. It is like at first being annoyed by a child who likes to play in ways that annoy us so much we scold or spank him. But later we understand that it's natural for a child to play and act like that, so we leave him alone. We let go and our troubles are over. Why are they over? Because we now accept the natural ways of children. Our outlook has changed and we now accept the true nature of things. We let go and our heart becomes more peaceful. We now have right understanding.

## Cobra

Mental activity is like a deadly, poisonous cobra. If we don't interfere with a cobra, it simply goes its own way. Even though it may be extremely poisonous, we are not affected by it. We don't go near it, or take hold of it, and so it doesn't bite us. The cobra does what is natural for a cobra to do. That's the way it is. If you are clever, you'll leave it alone. Likewise, you let be that which is not good - you let it be according to its own nature. You also let be that which is good. Don't grab at liking and disliking, just as you wouldn't grab at the cobra. One who is clever will have this kind of attitude towards the various moods that arise in his mind. When goodness arises, we let it be good. We understand its nature. In the same, we let be the non-good. We let it be according to its nature. We don't take hold of it because we don't want anything. We don't want evil. We don't want good. We don't want heaviness or lightness, happiness or suffering. When our wanting is at an end, peace is firmly established.

## Coconut Shells

Desire is a defilement. But we must first have desire in order to start practicing the Way. Suppose you went to buy coconuts at the market and while carrying them back home someone asked: "Why did you buy those coconuts?" "I bought them to eat," you reply. "Are you going to eat the shells, too?" "Of course not!" "I don't believe you," he insists. "If you're not going to eat the shells, then why did you buy them?" Well, what do you say? How are you going to answer that question?

We practice with desire to begin with. If we didn't have desire, we wouldn't practice. Contemplating in this way can give rise to wisdom, you know. For example, those coconuts: Are you going to eat the shells as well? Of course not. Then why do you take them? They're useful for wrapping the coconuts in. If after eating the coconuts you throw the shells away, there is no problem. Our practice is the same. We keep desire first, just like we do with the coconut shells, for it's still not time to "throw" it away. This is how the practice is. If somebody wants to accuse us of eating coconut shells, that's their business. We know what we're doing.

## Cooking

At first, we train the body and speech to be free of unwholesomeness. This is virtue. Some people think that to have virtue you must memorize Pali phrases and chant all day and night, but really all you have to do is make your body and speech blameless, and that's virtue. It's not so difficult to understand. It's just like cooking food - put in a little bit of this and a little bit of that until it's just right and it's delicious. And once it's delicious, you don't have to put anything else into it. The right ingredients have already been added. In the same way, taking care that our actions and speech are proper will give us delicious virtue, virtue that is just right.

## Crazy Man

Suppose one morning, you're walking to work and a man starts yelling insults at you. As soon as you hear his insults, your mind gets agitated. You don't feel so good, you feel angry and hurt, and you want to get even! A few days later, another man comes to your house and tells you, "Hey, that man who abused you the other day, he's crazy! Has been for years! He abuses everybody like that. Nobody takes notice of anything that he says." As soon as you hear this, you are suddenly relieved. That anger and hurt that you've pent up within you all these days melt away completely. Why? Because now you know the truth. Before, you didn't. You thought that man was normal, so you were angry at him and that caused you to suffer. As soon as you found out the truth, however, everything changed: "Oh, he's mad! That explains everything!"

When you understand the truth, you feel fine because you know for yourself. Understanding, you can then let go. If you don't know the truth, you cling right there. When you thought that the man who abused you was normal, for example, you could have killed him. But when you found out the truth, that he was mad, you felt much better. This is knowledge of the truth. Someone who sees the Dhamma has a similar experience. When attachment, aversion and delusion disappear, they disappear in the same way. As long as we don't know these things, we think, "What can I do? I have so much greed and aversion." This is not clear knowledge. It's just the same as when we thought the madman was sane. Until we learned that he was really otherwise, we weren't able to let go of our hurt and anger. Only when the mind sees for itself, can it uproot and relinquish attachment.

## Cup of Water

Many of those who came to see me have a high standing in the community. Among them are merchants, college graduates, teachers, and government officials. Their minds are filled with opinions about things. They are too clever to listen to others. It is like a cup of water. If a cup is filled with stale, dirty water, it is useless. Only after the old water has been thrown out can the cup become useful again. You must empty your minds of opinions, then you will see. Our practice goes beyond cleverness and stupidity. If you think that you are clever, wealthy, important, or an expert in Buddhism, you cover up the truth of non-self - I and mine. But Buddhism is letting go of self. Those who are too clever will never learn. They must first get rid of their cleverness, first empty their "cup".

## Dam

The training in concentration is the practice to make the mind firm and steady. This brings about peacefulness of mind. Usually our minds are moving and restless, hard to control. The mind follows sense distractions wildly, just like water flowing this way and that. Men, though, know how to control water so that it is of greater use to mankind. Men are clever. They know how to dam water, make large reservoirs and canals - all of this merely to channel water and make it more usable, so that it doesn't run wild and eventually settle down into a few low spots, its usefulness wasted. So, too, the mind that is dammed and controlled, trained constantly, will be of immeasurable benefit. The Buddha himself taught, "The mind that has been controlled brings true happiness, so train your minds well for the highest benefits." Similarly, the animals we see around us - elephants, horses, buffalos, and so on - must be trained before they can be useful for work. Only after they have been trained is their strength of benefit to us.

In the same way, the mind that has been trained will bring many more blessings than an untrained mind. The Buddha and His Noble Disciples all started out in the same way as us - with untrained minds. But, afterwards, look how they became the subjects of reverence for us all. And see how much benefit we can gain from their teachings. Indeed see what benefits have come to the entire world from these men who had gone through the training of the mind to reach the freedom beyond. The mind controlled and trained is better equipped to help us in all professions, in all situations. The disciplined mind will keep our lives balanced, make work easier, and develop and nurture reason to govern our actions. In the end, our happiness will increase accordingly as we follow the proper mind training.

## Deep Hole

Most people just want to perform good deeds to make merit, but they don't want to give up wrongdoing. It's just that "the hole is too deep." Suppose there was a hole and there was something at the bottom of it. Now anyone who put his hand into the hole and didn't reach the bottom would say the hole was too deep. If a hundred or a thousand people put their hands down the hole, they'd all say, "The hole is too deep!" No one would say that his arm was too short. We have to come back to ourselves. We have to take a step back and look at ourselves. Don't blame the hole for being too deep. Turn around and look at your own arm. If you can see this, then you will make progress on the spiritual path and will find happiness.

## Dirty Clothes

It is only natural that when our body is dirty and we put on dirty clothes that our mind will not be light and cheerful but will feel uncomfortable and depressed. So, too, when morality is not practiced, our bodily actions and speech are dirty. This causes the mind to be unhappy, uncomfortable, and distressed. We become separated from right practice and this prevents us from penetrating into the essence of the Dhamma in our mind. Wholesome bodily actions and speech themselves depend on the mind properly trained, since mind orders body and speech. Therefore, we must continue to practice by training our minds.

## Drinking Glass

How can you find right understanding? I can answer you simply by using this glass of water I am holding. It appears to us as clean and useful, something to drink from and keep for a long time. Right understanding is to see this as broken glass, as if it has already been shattered. Sooner or later, it will be shattered. If you keep this understanding while you are using it - that all it is is a combination of elements which come together in this form and then break apart - then no matter what happens to the glass, you will have no problem. The body is like the glass. It is also going to break apart and die. You have to understand that. Yet when you do, it doesn't mean you should go and kill yourself, just as you shouldn't take the glass and break it or throw it away. The glass is something to use until it falls apart in its own natural way. In the same way, the body is a vehicle to use until goes its own way. Your task is to see what the natural way of things is. This understanding can make you free in all the changing circumstances of the entire world.

## Drunk

Anyone attached to the senses is like a drunkard whose liver is not yet cooked. He does not know when he has had enough. He continues to indulge and drink carelessly. He's caught badly and later suffers illness and pain.

## Duck

Your practice is like raising a duck. Your duty is to feed it and give it water. Whether the duck grows fast or slowly is its business, not yours. Let it go and just do your own work. Your business is to practice. If it's fast or

slow, just know it, don't try to force it. This kind of practice has a good foundation.

## Empty Space

People want to go to Nibbana but when you tell them that there is nothing there, they begin to have second thoughts. But there's nothing there, nothing at all! Look at the roof and floor here. Think of the roof as a "becoming" and the floor as a "becoming", too. You can stand on the roof and you can stand on the floor, but in the empty space between the roof and the floor there is no place to stand. Where there is no becoming, that's where there's emptiness, and to put it bluntly, we say that Nibbana is this emptiness. People hear this and they back up a bit. They don't want to go. They're afraid that they won't see their children or relatives. That's why whenever we bless the laity by wishing them long life, beauty, and strength, they become very happy. However, if we start talking about letting go and about emptiness they don't want to hear about it. But have you ever seen a very old person with a beautiful complexion, or a lot of strength, or a lot of happiness? No! But we wish them long life; beauty, happiness and strength, and they are all pleased. They're attached to becoming, to the cycle of birth and death. They prefer to stand on the roof or on the floor. Few are they who dare to stand in the empty space between.

## Family

If you want to find Dhamma, it has nothing to do with the forest with mountains or the caves. It's only in the heart, and has its own language of experience. There is a great difference between concepts and direct experience. With a glass of hot water, whoever puts his finger into it will have the same experience - hot - which can be expressed in as many different words as there are different languages. Similarly, whoever looks deeply into the heart will have the same experience, no matter what his nationality, culture, or language may be. If in your heart you come to that taste of truth, of Dhamma, then you become like one big family - like mother and father, sisters and brothers - because you've tasted that essence of the heart which is the same for all.

## Fertilizer

Our defilements are like fertilizer for our practice. It's the same as taking filthy stuff like chicken manure and buffalo dung to fertilize our fruit trees so that the fruit will be sweet and abundant. In suffering, there is happiness; in confusion there is calm.

## Fire

Nothing happens immediately, so in the beginning we can't see any results from our practice. This is like the example that I have often given you of the man who tries to make fire by rubbing two sticks together. "They say there's fire here!" He says, looking at his sticks. He then begins rubbing energetically. He rubs on and on, but soon becomes impatient. He wants to have that fire, but the fire just won't come, so he gets discouraged and stops to rest for while. When he starts again the initial heat that he had worked up has already been lost so the going is slow. He just doesn't keep at long enough. He rubs and rubs until he is tired and stops altogether. Not only is he tired, but he becomes more and more discouraged. "There is no fire here!" He finally decides and gives up completely. Actually he was doing the work, but there wasn't enough heat to start the fire. The fire was there all the time, but he didn't carry on to the end. Likewise with the mind. Until we are able to reach peace, the mind will continue in its confusion. For this reason the teacher says, "Just keep on doing it. Keep on with the practice!" Maybe we think, "If I don't yet understand, how can I do it?" Until we're able to practice properly, wisdom won't arise. So we say just keep on with it.

## Fish

We don't want desire, but if there is no desire, why practice? We must have desire to practice. Buddha had desire too. It's there all the time, but it's only a condition of the mind. Those with wisdom, however, have desire but no attachment. Our desires are like catching a big fish in a net - we must wait until the fish loses strength and then we can catch it easily. But all the time we must keep on watching it so that it doesn't escape.

## Fish and Frog

If you attach to the senses, you're the same as a fish caught on a hook. When the fisherman comes, you can struggle all you want, but you won't be able to get loose. Actually you're not caught like a fish, but more like a frog. A frog gulps down the whole hook right to its guts. A fish just gets it caught in its mouth.

## Fish Trap

If you see clearly the harm in the benefit of something, you won't have to wait for others to tell you about it. Consider the story of the fisherman who finds something in his fish trap. He knows something is in it because he can hear it flopping about inside. Thinking it's a fish; he reaches his hand into the trap, only to grab hold of a different kind of animal. He can't see it, so he's not sure what it is. It could be an eel, but it could also be a snake. If he throws it away, he may regret it, for if it turns out to be an eel, he'll have lost something nice for dinner. On the other hand, if he keeps on holding onto it and it turns out to be a snake, it may bite him. He's just not sure. But his desire is so strong that he holds on, just in case it's an eel. The minute he brings it out and sees that it's a snake, however, he doesn't hesitate to fling it away from himself. He doesn't have to wait for someone to call out, "Hey, it's a snake! Let go!" The sight of the snake tells him what to do more clearly than words could ever do. Why? Because he sees the danger - snakes can bite and make you very sick or kill you. Who has to tell him about that? In the same way, if we practice until we see things as they are, we won't meddle with things that are harmful.

## Fisherman

Our practice of contemplation will lead us to understanding. Let us take the example of a fisherman pulling in his net with a big fish in it. How do you think he feels when pulling it in again? If he's afraid that the fish will escape, he'll rush and start to struggle with the net, grabbing and tugging at it. In this way, before he knows it, the big fish will have escaped. The fisherman mustn't try too hard. In the old days, they taught that we should do it gradually, carefully gathering it in without losing it. This is how it is in our practice. We gradually feel our way with it, carefully gathering it in without losing it. Sometimes it happens that we don't feel like practicing. Maybe we don't want to look, or maybe we don't want to know, but we keep on with it. We continue feeling for it. This is the practice. If we feel like doing it, we do it. If we don't feel like doing it, we do it just the same. We just keep on doing it. If we are enthusiastic about our practice, the power of our faith will give us the energy needed to practice, but we will still be without wisdom. Being energetic alone won't make us benefit much from our practice. On the contrary, after practicing energetically for long time, the feeling that we are not going to find the Way may arise. We may feel that we cannot find peace, or that we're not sufficiently equipped to do the practice. Or maybe we feel that this Way just isn't possible anymore. So we give up! At this point, we must be very, very careful. We must use patience and endurance. It's just like pulling in the big fish - we gradually feel our way with it, we carefully pull it in. The struggle won't be too difficult, so continue to pull it in without stopping. Eventually, after some time, the fish becomes tired and stops fighting and we're able to catch it easily. Usually this is how it happens. We practice gradually and carefully, gathering it together. It's in this manner that we do our contemplation.

## Flashlight

In Buddhism we are endlessly hearing about letting go and about not clinging to anything. What does this mean? It means to take hold of but not to cling. Take this flashlight, for example. We wonder: "What is this?" So we pick it up: "Oh, it's a flashlight." Then we put it down again. We take hold of things, even of wanting, in this way. If we didn't take hold of wanting, what could we do? We couldn't do walking meditation or anything else. It's wanting, yes, a defilement, that's true, but later on that leads to perfection. So we must take hold of things first. It is like coming here. First you had to want to come here. If you didn't want to, you wouldn't be here today. We do things because of wanting, but when wanting arises, we don't cling to it, just like we don't cling to that flashlight - "What's this?" We pick it up. "Oh, it's a flashlight." We then put it down again. This is what "holding but not clinging" means. We know and then we let go. We don't foolishly cling to things, but we "hold" them with wisdom and then let them go. Good or bad, we let them all go.

## Freeway

Not having full, clear knowledge of the true nature of things, we will go on thinking that we are the *sankharas* or that we are happiness and unhappiness. The truth is that we can't force things to follow our desires. They follow the way of Nature. A simple comparison is this: Suppose you go and sit in the middle of a freeway with the cars and trucks speeding down toward you. You can't get angry at the cars, shouting, "Don't drive over here! Don't drive over here!" It's a freeway. You can't tell them that. So what can you do? You get off the road. The road is the place where cars run. If you don't want the cars to be there, you suffer. It's the same with *sankharas*. We say they disturb us, like when we sit in meditation and hear a sound. We think, "Oh, that sound's bothering me!" If we understand that the sound bothers us, then we suffer accordingly. If we investigate a little deeper, we will see that it's we who go out and disturb the sound. The sound is simply sound. If we understand it in this way, then there's nothing more to it. We leave the sound alone. We see that the sound is one thing and we are another. This is real knowledge of the truth. We see both sides, so we have peace. If we see only one side there is suffering. Once we see both sides, then we follow the Middle Way. This is the right practice of the mind. This is what we call straightening out our understanding. In the same way, impermanence and death are the nature of all *sankharas*, but we don't want it that way. We want the opposite to be true. We want to find truth within the things that aren't

true. Whenever someone sees like this and clings to the *sankharas* as being himself, he suffers. The Buddha told us to contemplate this.

## Frog

The more you neglect the practice, and the more you neglect going to the monastery to listen to the Teachings, the more your mind will sink down into a bog, like a frog going into a hole. Later when someone comes along with a hook, the frog's days are over. He doesn't have a chance. All he can do is stretch out his neck and be caught. So watch out you don't back yourself up into a hole. Someone may just come along with a hook and pull you up. At home, being pestered by your children and grandchildren, and possessions, you are even worse off than the frog! You don't know how to detach yourself from them. When old age, sickness and death come along, what will you do? This is the hook that's going to catch you. Which way will you turn?

## Fruit Tree

When a fruit tree is in bloom, a strong gust of wind will blow some of its blossoms to the ground. Those that don't fall will eventually grow into small green fruit. But then another gust comes and some of them will fall, too. As for the rest, they will grow to become fruit nearly ripe, or even fully ripe, before they fall. And so it is with people. Like flowers and fruit in the wind, they, too, fall in different stages of life. Some people die while still in the womb, others within only a few days after birth. Some people live for a few years, then die, never having reached maturity. Some die in their youth. Still others reach a ripe old age before they die. When reflecting upon people, consider the nature of fruit in the wind - both are uncertain. Our minds are also uncertain. A mental impression arises, draws and blows at the mind, and then the mind falls - just like fruit.

The Buddha understood this uncertain nature of things. He observed the phenomena of fruit in the wind and reflected upon the monks and novices who were his disciples. He found that they, too, were essentially of the same nature - uncertain! How could it be otherwise? This is just the way of all things.

## Garbage Pit

If your mind becomes quiet and concentrated, it is an important tool to use. But if you're sitting just to get concentrated so you can feel happy and pleasant, then you're wasting your time. The practice is to sit and let your mind become still and concentrated, and then use that quiet concentration to examine the nature of the mind and body. If you make the mind simply quiet with no investigation, however, then for that time it's peaceful and there is no defilement, but that is like taking a stone and covering up a smelly garbage pit. When you take the stone away, it's still full of smelly garbage. You must use your concentration, not to attain temporary bliss, but to accurately examine the nature of the mind and body. This is what actually frees you.

## Gift

We should investigate the body within the body. Whatever's in the body, go ahead and look at it. If we just see the outside, it's not clear. We see hair, nails, and so on and they are just pretty things that entice us. So the Buddha taught us to look at the inside of the body, to see the body within the body. What is the body? Look closely and see! We will see even though it is within us, we've never seen it. Wherever we go we carry it with us, but we still don't know it at all. It's as if we go and visit some relatives at their house and they give us a gift. We take it and put it in our bag and then leave without opening it to see what is inside. When at last we open it we find it is full of poisonous snakes! Our body is like that. If we just see the shell of it, we say it's fine and beautiful. We forget ourselves. We forget impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and not-self. If we look within this body, it's really repulsive. There's nothing beautiful in it. If we look according to reality, without trying to sugar things over, we'll see that it's really sad and wearisome. Dispassion will then arise. This feeling of disinterest does not come from feeling an aversion toward the world. It's simply our mind clearing up, our mind letting go. We see all things as not being substantial or dependable. However we want them to be, they just go their own way, regardless. Things that are unstable are unstable. Things that are not beautiful are not beautiful.

So the Buddha said that when we experience sights, sounds, tastes, smells, bodily feelings or mental states, we should let them go. Whether happiness or unhappiness, they're all the same. So let them go!

## Grass

You must contemplate in order to find peace. What people usually mean whenever they say peace is only the calming down of the mind and not the calming down of the defilements. The defilements are simply being temporarily subdued, just like grass being covered by a stone. If you take the stone away, the grass will grow back again in a short time. The grass hadn't really died; it was just being suppressed. It's the same when sitting in meditation. The mind is calm, but the defilements are not really calm. Therefore samadhi is not a sure thing. To

find real peace you must develop wisdom. Samadhi is one kind of peace, like the stone covering the grass. This is only a temporary peace. The peace of wisdom is like putting the stone down and just leaving it there. In this way the grass can't possibly grow back again. This is real peace, the calming of the defilements, the sure peace that results from wisdom.

## Hand

Those who study theory and those who practice meditation misunderstand each other. Usually those who emphasize study say things like, "Monks who only practice meditation just follow their own opinions, they have no basis in their teaching." Actually, in one sense, these two ways of study and practice are exactly the same thing. We can understand this better if we consider the front and back of our hand. If we hold our hand out, it seems like the back of our hand has disappeared. Actually the back of our hand hasn't gone anywhere. It's merely hidden underneath. We should keep this in mind when we consider practice. If we think that it has "disappeared," we'll go off to study, hoping to get results. But it doesn't matter how much we study the Dhamma, we'll never understand it if we don't know it in accordance with Truth. If we do understand the real nature of Dhamma, then we begin to let go. This is surrendering, removing attachment, not clinging anymore, or if there is still clinging, it diminishes as time goes by. So study and practice are really just two sides of the same hand.

## Hole

At times it may seem to some of you that I contradict myself when I teach, but the way I teach is very simple. It is as if I see someone coming down a road he isn't familiar with but which I have traveled on many times before. I look up and see him about to fall into a hole on the right-hand side of the road, so I call out to him to go left. Likewise, if I see someone else about to fall into a hole on the left, I call out to him to go right. The instructions are different, but I teach them to travel in the same direction on the same road. I teach them to let go of both extremes and come back to the center where they will arrive at the true Dhamma.

## House

All my disciples are like my children. I have only loving-kindness for them and care for their welfare. If I appear to make you suffer, it is for your own good. I know some of you are well educated and very knowledgeable. People with little education and world knowledge can practice easily. But people with a lot of knowledge are like someone who has a very large house to clean. They have a lot to do. But when the house has been cleaned, they will have a big, comfortable living space. In the meantime, be patient. Patience and endurance are essential to our practice.

## Housewife

Don't be like a housewife washing the dishes with a scowl on her face. She's so intent on cleaning the dishes that she doesn't realize her own mind is dirty! Have you ever seen this? She only sees the dirty dishes. She's looking too far away from herself, isn't she? Some of you have probably experienced this, I'd say. This is where you have to look. People concentrate on cleaning the dishes, but they let their minds go dirty. This is not good. They're forgetting themselves.

## Jackal

The Buddha and his disciples once saw a jackal run out of the forest they were staying in. It stood still for a while, then it ran into the underbrush, and then out again. Then it ran into a tree hollow, then out again. One minute it stood, the next it ran, then it lay down, then it jumped up. The jackal had the mange. When it stood, the mange would eat into its skin, so it would run. Running, it was still uncomfortable, so it would stop. Standing, it was still uncomfortable, so it would lie down. Then it would jump up again, running to the underbrush, the tree hollow, never staying still.

The Buddha said, "Monks, did you see that jackal this afternoon? Standing, it suffered. Lying down, it suffered. It blamed standing for its discomfort. It blamed sitting. It blamed running and lying down. It blamed the tree, the underbrush, and the cave. In fact, the problem was with none of those things. The problem was with his mange." We are just the same as the jackal. Our discontent is due to wrong view. Because we don't exercise sense restraint, we blame our suffering on externals. Whether we live in Thailand, America or England, we aren't satisfied. Why not? Because we still have wrong view. Just that! So wherever we go, we aren't content. But just as that jackal would be content wherever it went as soon as its mange was cured, so would we be content wherever we went once we cured ourselves of wrong view.

## Knife



A knife has a blade, a spine and a handle. Can you lift up only the blade? Can you lift up only the handle? The handle, the spine and the blade are all parts of the same knife. When you pick up the knife, all three parts come up at the same time. In the same way, if you pick up that which is good, the bad must follow. People search for goodness and try to throw away evil, but they don't study that which is neither good nor evil. If you don't study this, then you won't have real understanding. If you pick up goodness, badness follows. If you pick up happiness, suffering follows. Train the mind until it is above good and evil. That's when the practice is finished.

## **Knot**

We contemplate happiness and unhappiness as uncertain and impermanent and understand that all the various feelings we experience are not lasting and not to be clung to. We see things in this way, because we have wisdom. We understand that things are impermanent according to their own nature. If we have this kind of understanding, it's like taking hold of one strand of a rope that makes a knot and pulling it in the right direction. The knot will then loosen and begin to untangle. It'll no longer be so tight and tense.

This is similar to understanding that things don't always have to be the way they've always been. Before, we felt that things had to be a certain way, and in so doing, we pulled the knot tighter and tighter. This tightness is suffering. Living that way is very tense. So we loosen the knot a little and relax. Why do we loosen it? Because it's tight! If we don't cling to it, then we can loosen it. It's not a condition that must always be that way. We use the teaching of impermanence as our basis. We see that both happiness and unhappiness are not permanent. We see them as not dependable. There's absolutely nothing that is permanent. With this kind of understanding, we gradually stop believing in the various moods and feelings that come up in our mind. Wrong understanding will decrease in the same degree that we stop believing in them. This is what is meant by undoing the knot. It continues to become looser. Attachment will be gradually uprooted.

## **Ladle**

If you listen to the Dhamma teachings but don't practice, you're like a ladle in a soup pot. The ladle is in the soup pot every day, but it doesn't know the taste of the soup. You must reflect and meditate.

## **Leaking Roof**

Most of us just talk about practice without having really done it. This is like the man whose roof is leaking on one side so that he sleeps on the other side of the house. When the sunshine comes in on that side, he rolls over to the other side, all the time thinking, "When will I ever get a decent house like everyone else?" If the whole roof leaks, then he just gets up and leaves. This is not the way to do things, but that's how most people are.

## **Leaves**

Right now we are sitting in a peaceful forest. Here, if there's no wind, the leaves remain still. When a wind blows, they flap and flutter. The mind is the same. When it contacts a mental impression, it, too, flaps and flutters. According to the nature of that mental impression. And the less we know of Dhamma, the more the mind will continually pursue mental impressions. Feeling happy, it succumbs to happiness. Feeling suffering, it succumbs to suffering. It's in a constant flap.

## **Letter**

Just know what is happening in your mind - not happy or sad about it, not attached. If you suffer, see it, know it, and be empty. It's like a letter - you have to open it before you can know what's in it.

## **Log**

If we cut a log of wood and throw it into a river, it floats downstream. If that log doesn't rot or get stuck on one of the banks of the river, it will finally reach the ocean. Likewise, the mind that practices the Middle Way and doesn't attach to either extreme of sensual indulgence or self-mortification will inevitably attain true peace.

The log in our analogy represents the mind. The banks of the river represent, on one side, love, and on the other, hate. Or you can say that one bank is happiness and the other unhappiness. To follow the Middle Way is to see love, hate, happiness and unhappiness for what they really are - only feelings. Once this understanding has been achieved, the mind will not easily drift toward them and get caught. It is the practice of the understanding mind not to nurture any feelings that rise or to cling to them. The mind then freely flows down the river unhampered and eventually flows into the "ocean" of *Nibbana*.

## Lumber

If you don't bother to train your heart, then it remains wild, following the ways of nature. It's possible to train that nature, however, so that it can be used to advantage. This is comparable to trees. If we just left trees in their natural state, then we would never be able to build houses with them. We couldn't make planks or anything of use to build houses with. However, if a carpenter came along wanting to build a house, he would go looking for trees in their natural state. He would take raw material and use it to advantage. In a short time he could have a house built. Meditation and developing the heart are similar to this. You must take this natural, untrained heart as you would take a tree in its natural state in the forest, and train it so that it is more refined, more aware of itself, and more sensitive.

## Maggot

Contentment doesn't depend on how many people we are with. It comes only from right view. If we have right view, then wherever we stay, we are content.

But most of us have wrong view. It's just like a maggot living in a pile of dung. It lives in filth, its food is filth, but it suits the maggot. If you take a stick and dislodge it from its lump of dung, it'll squirm and wiggle back to its home. We are the same. The teacher advises us to see rightly but we squirm about and are uncomfortable. We quickly run back to our old habits and views because that's where we feel at home. If we don't see the harmful consequences of all our wrong views, then we can't leave them. The practice is difficult, so we should listen to the teacher.

## Mango

We say that morality, concentration and wisdom are the path on which all the Noble Ones have walked to enlightenment. They are all one. Morality is concentration, concentration is morality. Concentration is wisdom, wisdom is concentration. It's like a mango. When it's a flower, we call it a flower. When it becomes a fruit, we call it a mango. When it ripens, we call it a ripe mango. It's a lone mango, but it continually changes. The big mango grows from the small mango, the small mango grows from the small mango, and the small mango becomes a big one. You can call them different fruit or all one. Morality, concentration and wisdom are related like this. In the end it's the entire path that leads to enlightenment. The mango, from the moment it first appears as a flower, simply grows to ripeness. We should see it like this. Whatever others call it, it doesn't matter. Once it's born, it grows to old age and then where? We should contemplate this. Some people don't want to be old. When they get old, they become regretful. These people shouldn't eat ripe mangoes. Why do we want the mangoes to be ripe? If they're not ripe in time, we ripen them artificially, don't we? But when we become old we're filled with regret. Some people cry. They're afraid to get old and die. If it's like this, they shouldn't eat ripe mangoes. They'd better eat just the flowers! If we can see this then we can see the Dhamma. Everything clears up and we are at peace. Medicines and Fruit

## Medicines and Fruit

Don't be angry with those who don't practice. Don't speak against them. Just continually advise them. They will come to the Dhamma when their spiritual factors are developed. It's like selling medicines. We advertise our medicines and those with a headache or stomachache will come and take some. Those who don't want our medicines let them be. They're like fruit that are still green. We can't force them to be ripe and sweet — just let them be. Let them grow up, sweeten and ripen all by themselves. If we think like this, our minds will be at ease. So we don't need to force anybody. Simply advertise our medicines and leave it at that. When someone is ill, he'll come around and buy some.

## Merchants

Everything that you do you must do with clarity and awareness. When you see clearly, you'll no longer feel the need to force yourself to do and complete everything. Now you are burdened with difficulties because you miss the point: whatever you do, you should just do with your body and mind completely. This will bring you peace. If you think you have to do and complete everything, then whenever you leave something undone or incomplete, you'll feel discontented and never stop worrying about it. You want to complete everything, but it's really impossible to do so. Take the case of the merchants who regularly come here to see me. They say, "Oh, when my debts are all paid and property in order, I'll come to get ordained." They talk like that, but will they ever finish and get it all in order? There's no end to it. They pay off their debts with another loan; they pay off that one, and do it again. A merchant thinks that when he gets rid of all of his debts, he will be happy, but there's no end to paying things off. That's the way worldliness fools us. We go around and around like that never realizing our predicament.

## Oil and Water

Oil and water are different in the same way that a wise man and an ignorant man are different. The Buddha lived with form, sound, odor, taste, touch and thought, but he was an *arahant* so he was able to turn away from them rather than toward them. He turned away and let go little by little, since he understood that the heart is just the heart and thought is just thought. He didn't confuse them and mix them together like an ignorant man does. The heart is just the heart. Thoughts and feelings are just thoughts and feelings. Let things be as they are. Let form be just form, let sound be just sound, let thought be just thought. Why should we bother to attach to them? If we feel and think in this way, then there is detachment and separateness. Our thoughts and feelings will be on one side and our heart will be on the other. Just like oil and water - they are in the same bottle but they are separate.

## Orphan

In the end, people become neurotic. Why? Because they don't know. They just follow their moods and don't know how to look after their own minds. When the mind has no one to look after it, it's like a child without a mother or a father. An orphan has no refuge, and without a refuge, he is very insecure. Likewise, if the mind is not looked after, if there is no training or maturation of character with right understanding, it's really troublesome.

## Ox Cart

Suppose we had a cart, and an ox to pull it. The wheels of the cart aren't long, but the tracks are. As long as the ox pulls the cart, the tracks will follow. The wheels are round, yet the tracks are long. Just looking at the stationary cart, one couldn't see anything long about the wheels, but once the ox starts pulling the cart, we see the tracks stretching out behind. As long as the ox keeps pulling, the wheels keep turning. But there comes a day when the ox gets tired and throws off its yoke. The ox walks off and the cart is left there. The wheels no longer turn. In time the cart falls apart. Its constituent parts go back into the four elements of earth, water, wind and fire. People who follow the world are the same. If one were to look for peace within the world, one would go on and on without end, just like the wheels of a cart. As long as we follow the world, there is no stopping, no rest. If we simply stop following it, the wheels of the cart no longer turn. There is stopping right there. Following the world ceaselessly, the tracks go on. Creating bad *kamma* is like this. As long as we continue to follow the old ways, there is no stopping. If we stop, then there is stopping. This is the practice of Dhamma.

## Pool

Be mindful and let things take their natural course, then your mind will become quiet in any surroundings. It will become still like a clear forest pool and all kinds of wonderful and rare animals will come to drink from it. Then you will clearly see the nature of all things in the world. You will see many wonderful and strange things come and go. But you will be still. This is the happiness of the Buddha.

## Rainwater

Actually the mind, like rain water, is pure in its natural state. If we were to drop green dye into clear rainwater, however, it would turn green. If yellow dye were added, it would turn yellow. The mind reacts similarly. When a comfortable mental impression drops into the mind, the mind is comfortable. When the mental impression is uncomfortable, the mind is uncomfortable. The mind becomes cloudy, like the colored water. When clear water contacts yellow, it turns yellow. When it contacts green, it turns green. It will change color every time. Actually the water that turned green or yellow is naturally clean and clear. This is also the natural state of the mind - clean and pure and unconfused. It becomes confused only because it pursues mental impressions. It gets lost in its moods.

## River Flow

There's nothing wrong with the way the body grows old and gets sick. It just follows its nature. So it's not the body that causes us suffering, but our own wrong thinking. When we see the right wrongly, there's bound to be confusion. It's like the water of a river. It naturally flows downhill. It never flows uphill. That's its nature. If we were to go and stand on the bank of a river, and seeing the water flowing swiftly down its course, foolishly want it to flow back uphill, we would suffer. We would suffer because of our wrong view, our thinking "against the stream." If we had right view, we would see that the water must flow downhill. Until we realize and accept this fact, we will always be agitated and never find peace of mind. Our body is like the river that must flow downhill. It passes through youth, old age and finally dies. Don't let us go wishing it were otherwise. It's not something we have the power to remedy. Don't go against the stream!

## Road

Wherever you are, know yourself by being natural and watchful. If doubts arise let them come and go. When you meet defilements, just see them and overcome them by letting go of them. It's very simple - hold on to nothing. It's as though you are walking down a road. Periodically you will run into obstacles. When you meet defilements, just see them and overcome them by letting go of them. Don't think about the obstacles you have already passed. Don't worry about the obstacles you have not yet met. Stick to the present. Don't be concerned about the length of the road or about your destination. Everything is changing. Whatever you pass, do not cling to it. Eventually the mind will reach its natural balance. Then it will be still whether you sit with your eyes closed or walk around in a big city.

## Rock

The teaching that people least understand and which conflicts most with their own opinions is the teaching of letting go or working with the empty mind. When we conceive this in worldly terms, we become confused and think that we can do anything we want. It can be interpreted in this way, but its real meaning is closer to this: It's as if we were carrying a heavy rock. After a while we begin to feel its weight, but we don't know how to let go. So we endure this heavy burden all the time. If someone tells us to throw it away, we say, "If I throw it away, I won't have anything left!" If told of all the benefits to be gained by throwing it away, we would not believe it, but would keep on thinking, "If I throw my rock away, I will have nothing." So we keep on carrying this heavy rock until it becomes so unbearably heavy, and we become so weak and exhausted, that we just have to drop it. Having dropped it, we suddenly experience the benefits of letting go. We immediately feel better and lighter and we know for ourselves how much of a burden carrying a rock can be. Before we let go of the rock, we couldn't possibly know the benefits of letting go. Later on we may start carrying burdens again, but now we know what the results will be, so we can now let go more easily. This understanding - that it's useless carrying burdens around and that letting go brings ease and lightness - is an example of knowing ourselves. Our pride, our sense of self that we depend on, is the same as that heavy rock. Like that rock, if we think about letting go of self, we are afraid that without it there would be nothing left. But when we can finally let it go we realize for ourselves the ease and comfort of not clinging.

## Screw

If you clearly see the truth through meditation, then suffering will become unwound, just like a screw. When you unwind a screw, it withdraws. It's not tightly fixed as when you screw it, clockwise. The mind withdraws like this. It lets go, it relinquishes. It's not tightly bound within good and evil, within possessions, praise and blame, happiness or suffering. If we don't know the truth, it's like tightening the screw all the time. You screw it down until it crushes you and you suffer over everything. When you unwind out of all that, you become free and at peace.

## Seedling

In meditation, you must continuously be attentive, just like when planting a seedling. If you plant a seedling in one place, then after three days you pull it up and plant it in another place, and after three more days, pull it up again and plant it somewhere else, it will just die and not grow up and bear any fruit. Meditation is the same. If you do a seven-day meditation retreat and after leaving it, for seven months you go around "soiling" the mind, and then come back and do another seven-day retreat where you don't speak and you keep to yourself, it's like the tree. Your meditation practice won't be able to grow and it will die with out producing any real results.

## Sharp Knife

When we say that the mind stops, we mean that it feels as if it's stopped, that it does not go running about here and there. It's as if we have a sharp knife. If we go and cut away at things randomly, like stones, bricks and glass, without choosing carefully, our knife will quickly become blunt. We must cut only those things which are useful to cut. Our mind is the same. If we let our mind wander after thoughts or feelings which have no use or value, the mind will become weak because it has no chance to rest. If the mind has no energy, wisdom will not arise, because the mind without energy is a mind without concentration.

## Snake

People want happiness, not suffering. But in fact happiness is just a refined form of suffering. Suffering itself is the coarse form. We can compare them to a snake. The snake's head is unhappiness. The snake's tail is happiness. The snake's head is really dangerous. It has the poisonous fangs. If we touch it, it'll bite right away. But never

mind the head? Even if we go and hold onto the tail, it will turn around and bite us just the same, because both the head and tail belong to the one snake. Likewise happiness and unhappiness, pleasure and sadness, arise from the same snake: wanting. So when we're happy, the mind isn't really peaceful. For example, when we get the things we like, such as wealth, prestige, praise or happiness, we become pleased, but the mind remains uneasy for fear of losing them. That very fear isn't a peaceful state. Later we may really lose those things, then we truly suffer. So if we're not aware, even when happy, suffering is imminent. It's just like grabbing the snake's tail - if we don't let go, it'll bit. So be it the snake's conditions they're all just characteristics of the Wheel of Existence, of endless change.

## Spider

Watching a spider can give rise to wisdom. A spider spins its webs in any convenient niche and then sits in the center, staying still. Later a fly comes along and lands on its web. As soon as the fly touches and shakes the web - boop! ' the spider pounces on it and winds it up in thread. It stores the insect away and then returns again to collect itself silently in the center of its web. This is not at all different from our own minds. Our mind is comparable to the spider, and our moods and mental impressions to the various insects. The senses constantly stimulate the mind. When any of them contacts something, it immediately reaches the mind. The mind then investigates and examines it thoroughly, after which it returns to the center. "Coming to the center" means living mindfully with clear comprehension, being always alert and doing everything with precision - this is our center. There's really not a lot for us to do. We just carefully live in this way. But that doesn't mean that we live heedlessly thinking, "No need to do sitting or walking meditation!" and so forget all about our practice. We can't be careless. We must remain alert like the spider waiting to snatch up insects for its food. This is how we abide - alert, acting with precision and always mindfully comprehending with wisdom.

## Still, Flowing Water

Have you ever seen flowing water? Have you ever seen still water? If your mind is peaceful, it will be just like still, flowing water. Have you ever seen still, flowing water? There! You've only seen flowing water or still water haven't you? When your mind is peaceful, you can develop wisdom. Your mind will be like flowing water, and yet still, It's almost as if it were still, and yet it's flowing. So I call it "still, flowing water." Wisdom can arise here.

## Sweet Fruit

Even though a fruit is sweet, we must first taste it before we know what its taste is like. Yet, that fruit, even though no one tastes it, is still sweet. But nobody knows it. The Dhamma of the Buddha is like this. Even though it's the truth, it isn't true for those who don't really know it. No matter how excellent or fine it may be, it is worthless to them.

## Thermos Bottle

Read yourself, not books. Truth isn't outside. That's only memory, not wisdom. Memory without wisdom is like an empty thermos bottle - if you don't fill it, it's useless.

## Thirsty Man

A man comes walking along a road. He is very thirsty from his journey and is craving for a drink of water. He stops at a place beside the road and asks for a drink. The owner of the water says, "You can drink this water if you like. The color is good, the smell is good, the taste is good, too, but if you drink it, you will become ill. It'll make you sick enough to die or nearly die." The thirsty man does not listen. He's as thirsty as a person after an operation who has been denied a good drink of water for a while. He's crying for water! So he dips out a bit of water and swallows it down, finding it very tasty. He drinks his fill and gets so sick that he almost dies. He didn't listen to the warning that was given to him because of his overpowering desire.

This is how it is for a person caught in the pleasures of the senses. The Buddha taught that they are poisonous but he is thirsty and so he doesn't listen. He drinks in sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations and mind-objects and they are all delicious. So he drinks without stopping, and there he remains stuck fast until the day he dies.

## Thorn

All things are just as they are. They don't cause suffering to anybody. It's just like a thorn, a really sharp thorn. Does it make you suffer? No, it's just a thorn. It doesn't bother anybody. But if you go and stand on it, you'll suffer. Why is there suffering? Because you stepped on the thorn. The thorn is just minding its own business. It doesn't harm anybody. It's because of we ourselves that there's pain. Form, feeling, perception, volition, consciousness . . . all the things in this world are simply as they are. It's we who pick fights with them. And if we

hit them, they hit us back. IF they're left alone, they won't bother anybody. Only the drunkard gives them trouble.

## Trap

The Buddha taught that the objects of the senses are a trap, a trap of Mara's. It is a hunter's trap and the hunter is Mara. If animals are caught in a hunter's trap, it's a sorrowful predicament. They are caught fast and are held waiting for the owner of the trap. Have you ever snared birds? The snare springs and - boop! - caught by the neck! A good strong string holds it fast. Wherever the bird flies, it cannot escape. It flies here and flies there, but it's held tight, waiting for the owner of the snare to come. When the hunter comes along, that's it! The bird is struck with fear and there is no escape. The trap of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touch and mind-objects is the same. They catch us and bind us fast.

## Traveler

Naturally people who wish to reach their home are not those who merely sit and think about traveling. They must actually undertake the process of traveling step by step, and in the right direction as well, in order to finally reach home. If they take the wrong path, they may eventually run into difficulties, such as swamps or other obstacles, which are hard to get around. Or they may run into dangerous situations and thereby possibly never reach home. Those who reach home can relax and sleep comfortably. Home is a place of comfort. But if the traveler only passed by the front of his home or only walked around it, he would not receive any benefit from having traveled all the way home. In the same way, walking the path to reach the Buddha-Dhamma is something each one of us must do individually ourselves, for no one can do it for us. And we must travel along the proper path of morality, concentration and wisdom until we find the blessings of purity, radiance and peacefulness of mind that are the fruits of traveling the path. However if one only has knowledge of books, sermons, and sutras, that is, only knowledge of the map or plans for the journey, even in hundreds of lifetimes one will never know purity, radiance and peacefulness of mind. Instead one will just waste time and never get to the real benefits of practice. Teachers are those who point out the direction of the Path. After listening to the teachers, whether or not we walk the Path by practicing ourselves, and thereby reap the fruits of practice, is strictly up to each one of us.

## Trees

We can learn Dhamma from trees. A tree is born due to a cause and it, grows following the course of nature until it buds, flowers and bears fruit. Right here the tree is discoursing Dhamma to us, but we don't understand this. We're unable to bring it within and contemplate, so we don't know that the tree is teaching us without investigating: sweet, sour or bitter, it's the nature of the fruit. And this is Dhamma, the teaching of the fruit. Then the leaves grow old. They wither, die and fall from the tree. All we see is that the leaves have fallen down. We don't know that nature is teaching us. Later on, the new leaves sprout, and we merely see that, without taking it further. This is not the truth that is known through internal reflection.

If we can bring all this inward and investigate it, we will see that the birth of a tree and our own birth are no different. This body of ours is born and exists, dependent on conditions, on the elements of earth, water, wind and fire. Every part of the body changes according to its nature. It's no different from the tree. Hair, nails, teeth and skin, all change. If we know the things of nature, then we will know ourselves.

## Turtle

Looking for peace is like looking for a turtle with a mustache. You won't be able to find it. But when your heart is ready, it will come and look for you.

## Twigs and Root

As soon as we're born we're dead. Our birth and our death are just on thing. *It like a tree. When there are twigs, there must be a root. When there's a root, there must be twigs. You can't have one without the other.* It's a little funny to see how at a death people are so grief-stricken, and at a birth so delighted. I think if you really want to cry, then it would be better to do so when someone's born, for actually firth is death, death is birth; the root is the twig, the twig is the root. If you've got to cry, cry at the root, cry at the birth. Look closely and see that if there were no birth, there would be no death.

## Unthreshed Rice

People who study the Dhamma without penetrating to its true meaning are just like a dog sleeping on a pile of unthreshed rice. When it's hungry, it bounds off the pile of rice grain and runs off looking for scraps of food. Even though it's sleeping right on top of a pile of food, it doesn't know that. Why? Because it can't see the rice. Dogs

can't eat unthreshed rice. The food is there but the dog can't eat it. It doesn't know the rice. It might not be able to find anything to eat for a long time, and it may even die . . . right on top of that pile of rice! People are like this. No matter how much we study the Dhamma, we won't see it if we don't practice. If we don't see it, then we won't know it.

## Water Buffalo

The Buddha really taught the truth. If you contemplate it, there is nowhere you can argue with him. But we people are like a buffalo. If it's not tied down by all four legs, it'll not let itself be given any medicine. If tied down and it can *do anything --aha! - now if you want to, you can go ahead and give it medicine and it can't struggle away. At this extent it will give up. We people are similar. Only when we are completely bound up in suffering will we let go of our delusions. If we can still struggle away, we will not give up very easily.*

## Wild Chickens

As long as true wisdom hasn't yet arisen, we still see the senses and their objects as our enemies. But once true wisdom arises we no longer see them as such. They become the doorway to insight and clear understanding.

A good example is the wild chickens in the forest. We all know how much they fear humans. Yet since I've lived in the forest, I've been able to teach them and learn from them too. I began by throwing them rice to eat. At first they were afraid and wouldn't go near the rice. But after a while they got used to it and even began to expect it. They first thought the rice was a dangerous enemy. But there was no danger in the rice. They just didn't know the rice was food, so they were afraid. When they finally saw there was nothing to fear, they could come and eat peacefully. Wild chickens learn naturally like this. Living here in the forest, we learn in the same way. Before, we thought our senses were a problem, and because we thought our senses were a problem, and because we didn't know how to use them properly, they were troublesome. Through experience in practice, however, we learn to see them according to the Truth. We learn to use them, just as the chickens did with the rice. Then they're no longer against us and problems disappear.

## Yard Full of Animals

People often presume there would be a problem with language for the Westerners who wanted to stay at Ajahn Chah's monastery, but this was not the case. Someone once asked Ajahn Chah, "How do you teach all your Western disciples? Do you speak English or French? Do you speak Japanese or German?" "No," replied Ajahn Chah. "Then how do they manage?" he asked. "Do you have water-buffalos in your yard at home?" "Yes, I do."

"Do you have any cows, or dogs, or chickens?" "Yes, I have them, too," was the reply. "Tell me," Ajahn Chah asked, "do you speak Water-buffalo or Cow?" "No, of course not." "Well, how do you manage then?"

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Source : <http://www.dharmaweb.org>